

Talk before the Democratic Caucus of the U.S. Congress, September 19,  
2007

Eight months ago, on January 12 of this year former Senator George McGovern, Congressman John Murtha, General William Odom and I appeared before you here in this room on Capitol Hill. At that time we warned that the situation in Iraq, bad as it then was, would get worse. We four urged that we get out of Iraq with all deliberate speed. In the eight months since we last appeared before you

- More than another 746 American soldiers have been killed;
- about three times that number have been visibly wounded;
- perhaps ten times that number have been "invisibly" wounded including those who have suffered concussions that will debilitate them as long as they live; and
- another 80 or so billion dollars have been wasted.

All this expenditure of blood and money has given us an Iraq which is more vicious, more hostile to America, less willing to follow our lead and more prone to support violent actions against us now in Iraq and surely in the future all over the world.

My study of guerrilla warfare on which I lectured at the National War College argued that it is composed of 3 parts: politics, administration and combat. Politics and administration make up about 95% of the whole effort; they were lost before America even entered the war. So I predicted in 1963 that we had lost the war.

In Iraq today, we have lost the political element and as the mission of General James Jones showed that the police force we created for Iraq is so dysfunctional that it should be abolished and the General Accountability Office reported just in the last few days what we have long known that the Iraqi regime is hardly functioning. Indeed, only 7 of 18 provinces are even nominally under the control of the Iraq government. We are similarly struggling about only the residual 5%.

But, as in Vietnam, we are being told that "more time is needed," "We must stay the course," "We were near success," "the government is taking charge," and "there is light at the end of the tunnel."

To convince us that it had improved, President Lyndon Johnson brought back our military commander, General William Westmoreland, to reassure the Congress and the American people. He cut a fine figure with his medals and stars, was popular with the press, and what he said was very reassuring. With charts, graphs and other lecture room paraphernalia, he advised us that the Viet Cong were discouraged, their numbers had fallen by about 15%, they were "almost starving to death" and about half of their main forces were

"no longer combat effective." Victory, he said, "lies within our grasp and "the enemy's hopes are bankrupt." We were entering the phase of just mopping up the defeated remnants of the Viet Cong. He overawed the Congress and the public but unfortunately the Viet Cong were not listening. It was only two months later that they struck Saigon in the Tet offensive.

Today, I don't see anything quite like the Tet offensive in Iraq, but I also do not see anything like the war General David Petraeus so graphically portrayed. The bottom line is that force, even massive force, is not working. It never does. In fact it manufactures enemies because the relatives, neighbors and friends of the victims seek vengeance and the place to get it is in the resistance. So the numbers of insurgents grow and as some are killed or imprisoned, others take their place. The war goes on. General Petraeus admits that force does not work and offers us another way to fight the war, counterinsurgency.

Counterinsurgency sounds impressive, even mysterious, but it is not new. We tried it in Vietnam and it did not work for us; it didn't work for the Russians in Afghanistan either. We both tried the whole range of techniques. In Vietnam we put virtually the entire population -- about 7 of 10 Vietnamese in some 6,800 barbed wire-encircled strategic hamlets, assassinated or imprisoned thousands of suspected guerrillas, obliterated whole areas with a massive bombing and defoliating campaign, etc. In short we used the whole range of counterinsurgency techniques. What was the result? Listen to what the editors of the *Pentagon Papers* said about it in Vietnam: Our "program was, in short, an attempt to translated the newly articulated theory of counterinsurgency into operational reality. The objective was political though the means to its realization were a mixture of military, social, psychological, economic and political measures...The long history of these efforts were marked by consistency in results as well as in techniques: all failed dismally."

General Petraeus, with much fanfare, tells us that counterinsurgency is the answer in Iraq. But even he admits that it is not the central issue. What he says, and I quote, is that "Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate."

If this is true, and I agree that it is, can we do it? The short answer is no, we cannot. No insurgency in modern times has been defeated by foreigners because, in our age of politically conscious people, natives refuse to be ruled by foreigners. Thus, in Iraq today, 8 in 10 Iraqis want America out and believe it is legitimate to attack our soldiers to get us to leave. When we supply them with arms, as General Petraeus did with 190 thousand, they are sold or even given to the insurgents to kill Americans. He says he does not know what happened to them.

"If a nation expects to be ignorant and free," President Jefferson said, "it expects what never was and never will be." Clearly we need all the help we can get. But, Congress is not stepping up to its Constitutional duties to lead the nation and to avoid the worst that was inherent in this disastrous venture and to work intelligently, constructively and effectively toward a much better and far safer future. to be fair, at least some of the blame is yours. In a Democracy like ours, you, our Congressional leaders, must also be our teachers.

**Demanding** yourselves to know the facts, **guiding** us, your constituents, to understand them and then **enacting** wise legislation is surely why we elect you. But, as you know, respect for the Congress has hit an all-time low with about 4 in each five voters saying that they want to throw it out and get a new one.

To do your Constitutional duties, you need to go back to your constituencies and help them find the facts. If they live in a dream world, hoping for miracles, relying on clever gimmicks, listening only to sound-bytes and being out of touch with reality, they will surely be overwhelmed, as the whole country was after Vietnam, by a wave of disillusionment.

You also need to demand to know what *really* is happening. You are a newly empowered majority in this Congress. You need to be much tougher in rooting out the truth. Digging out the facts and sorting through misinformation is hard for reporters, but you, as members of Congress, have the power to demand the facts and the experience to evaluate them. We rely on you to do so.

**Third**, you must think ahead about what we can do. The "buck" really does stop with you. It was the Congress that forced the Johnson and Nixon administrations to come to grips with the reality of the Vietnam war; today, this task is up to you. You have the constitutional right and obligation to do it.

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Today, our country is faced with three options among which you must choose. They are: stay the course, cut and run or help the Iraqis to solve the terrible problems they face.

The First option is to stay the course. Everyone, even those who pushed us into this war and General Petraeus more recently now agree that using massive fire power and sending more troops to Iraq has not worked. The "surge" is not a coherent strategy. It is a tactic. It has been destructive of our national purpose and has tarnished our national image.

Thus, what we are told is a statesmanlike, prudent, rational and conservative policy, giving our efforts more time, will only make certain that, as in Vietnam, when we are finally forced out, we will face not "victory" but humiliation.

The Second option is what the President and his supporters have called "cut and run." Rightly, everyone worries what will happen if we do. But, let us be clear: a precipitate withdrawal will not, as some self-proclaimed experts have said, *create* chaos - Iraq is already chaotic. - but it will *leave Iraq in chaos*. We should try to avoid this.

Our Third Option is to get out of Iraq on an orderly schedule sufficiently rapidly to convince the Iraqis that they must pick up the pieces and implement a carefully constructed program that will help them to do so. This is the operational plan laid out by former Senator George McGovern and me in *Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now*. (published by Simon & Schuster in October 2006.) It could save thousands of American lives and upwards of \$350 billion. The plan calls for a number of steps of which five are the core:

┐ The first step is to replace our military force, with a "multinational stability force." It should not be imposed upon Iraq but should be employed by the Iraqis. This force should not try to fight the insurgents but to create and maintain an acceptable degree of stability to bridge the gap between the withdrawal of American forces and the coalescence of the Iraqis.

The second step is the creation of a national police force.

Third, we should stop encouraging the growth of an Iraqi army on which we have already spent about 19 billion dollars. Instead we should help to create an organization like our Corps of Engineers which Iraq really needs.

Fourth, we must act in ways that will convince the Iraqis that we really will leave their country.

┐ Fifth, we should offer all the help we can muster to the growth of civic institutions, professional societies and grassroots organizations. This is like reeducation after surgery: without it, Iraqi society will never recover from the trauma of the war and occupation.

In monetary costs, the whole program we have set forth might cost roughly \$12-14 billion. Implementing the program would save the lives of perhaps a thousand or more Americans and far more in incapacitated or walking wounded; about \$350 billion in direct costs, perhaps \$1 trillion in indirect costs, it would staunch the hemorrhaging of respect and good will for America throughout the world and finally, it would do far more than any police measures to reduce the danger of terrorism.